

the medical impact

Alcohol affects teens differently than adults

Many parents don't realize that alcohol impacts a teenager differently than an adult. In fact, alcohol significantly impacts the brain development of growing teens. Alcohol interferes with memory formation and impairs the sensitivity of the brain to critical chemical functions in adolescents more so than it does in adults¹. By delaying drinking until age 21, your child also reduces the risk of developing a serious alcohol-related problem by 70%. For every year that adolescents delay using alcohol, they decrease the odds of lifelong dependence by 15%, and alcohol abuse by 8%². Delaying your son or daughter's use of alcohol greatly improves their chances of leading a healthier, happier life both now and in the future.

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the **IMPACT** of alcohol on your teen

Physical effects:

Alcohol can harm many organs in your teen's body; The most striking is the

effect of alcohol on the function of brain chemistry in adolescents. With as little as one drink, alcohol impairs normal brain chemical function in adolescents significantly more than adults¹.

Alcohol dependence:

Kids who drink before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Research has shown that 40% of kids who begin drinking before age 15 will develop alcohol abuse or dependence at some point in their lives, that proportion drops to below 10% for those who begin drinking after age 21².

Unintentional injury and death:

Alcohol plays a major role in teenage injuries and fatalities. Alcohol-related traffic accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among teenagers. Alcohol is also a major factor in other leading causes of death and injury to teens in the U. S. including homicide, suicide, burns, drownings and falls³.

Emotional and psychological effects:

Alcohol impairs judgement. Alcohol has been linked strongly to teenage depression and suicide⁴.

[1] Source: M.A.D.D. website article *Brain 101*, by Scott Swartzwelder, Ph.D reprinted from DRIVEN magazine, Fall 1998

[2] Grant BE, Dawson DA, 1997. Age at onset of alcohol use and association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse* 9:103-110.

[3] Adapted from "Make a Difference Talk to Your Child About Alcohol" by National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism(NIAAA), page 4.

[4] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents*. Rockville, MD: Author, 1999. And Alcohol Epidemiologic Data System, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. [Estimates for alcohol-related deaths by age and cause.] Unpublished data, 1999. Based on National Center for Health Statistics 1994 *Mortality Data*.

The potential damage alcohol can do to your teenager: The risks are not limited to drinking and driving.

While the vast majority of Maine parents are deeply concerned about drinking and driving, it is often too easy to overlook the many other consequences of underage drinking. Alcohol is a powerful drug that slows down the body and the mind. It impairs coordination and slows reaction times. It clouds vision and judgement. Alcohol is detrimental to your child in ways beyond drinking and driving.

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The risky business of underage drinking

There are several social and health consequences which make underage drinking a serious public health problem. Underage drinking contributes to:

- Risky sexual behavior and unintended pregnancies¹
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as genital herpes and AIDS¹
- Academic failure and dropping out of school¹
- Criminal behavior—perpetrating rape, assault, robbery, murder and other violent crimes*²
- Becoming the victim of rape, assault, robbery, murder and other violent crimes*²

* The national juvenile justice system reports the majority of their cases involve alcohol use as a major contributing factor¹.

Want more help?

CALL 1-800-499-0027 (In-State Only) **or 207-287-8900**

TTY: 1-800-215-7604 (In-State Only) **or 207-287-4475** (Special Equipment Needed)

OSA MAINE OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE www.maineparents.net

¹ Excerpts on this page adapted from “Make a Difference” National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free” by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, Office of National Drug Control Policy, and the “National Survey of American attitudes on Substance Abuse VI: Teens” February 2001 conducted by QEV Analytics and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

² Source: Excerpt from “Interviews with the Experts. Former Surgeon General David Satcher, MD, PhD, on Binge Drinking.” On National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. web page www.ncadd.org/programs/awareness/satcher.html